The way to restore Muslims to their rightful place among nations

Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani

The way to restore Muslims to their rightful place among nations

السبيل لرجوع مكانة المسلمين التي تليق بهم بين الأمم

Author

Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani

Translated by

Omar bin Ahmed Tohamy

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Translator introduction

All praise is due to Allah; we praise Him and seek His forgiveness.

We seek refuge in Allah from the evils of our souls and the wickedness of our deeds.

He, whom Allah guides, none can misguide him, and he whom He misguides, none can guide him.

I bear witness there is no deity worthy of worship in truth except Allah, alone, without partner.

His is the dominion and His is the praise.

He gives life and causes death, and He is over all things competent. Now then:

I have translated the book before you, entitled (**The way to restore Muslims to their rightful place among nations**) by (**Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani**) because of the many benefits and advantages it contains for the Muslim.

This translation is my own effort. If I do well, it is from Allah and His guidance to me, and if I make a mistake, it is from myself and from Satan.

I ask Allah to make this work of mine purely for Him and to spread the word of truth throughout the entire earth and to teach Muslims who do not speak Arabic their religion that Allah has chosen for them.

The one in need of his Lord's forgiveness: **Omar bin Ahmed Tohamy**.

Introduction

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

All praise is due to Allah. We praise Him, seek His help, and ask for His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil within ourselves and from the evil of our deeds.

Whomsoever Allah guides, none can lead astray, and whomsoever He leads astray, none can guide. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah alone, without partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ﴾

"O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslims [in submission to Him]" [Al Imran: 102]

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾

"O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer." [An-Nisa: 1]

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَمَن يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا﴾

"O you who have believed, fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice. He will [then] amend for you your deeds and forgive you your sins. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly attained a great attainment." [Al-Ahzab: 70-71

And now:

This is a great message[1] of benefit and advantage to both the general public and scholars. It is written by a scholar of this era, the esteemed Sheikh Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (may Allah preserve him and benefit us through him), who answers a question frequently asked by those zealous for this religion, which they hold in their hearts and occupy their minds with day and night. The gist of the question is:

[1] **The origin of this message is a recorded tape, then it was written down and printed in the Salafiyya magazine, issue number four, in the year 1419 AH.**

What is the path to the advancement of Muslims, and what course should they take so that Allah may empower them and place them in their rightful position among the nations?

The eminent scholar al-Albani (may Allah benefit us through him) provided a detailed and clear answer to this question. Given the need for this answer, we decided to publish it. I ask Allah Almighty to make it beneficial and to guide Muslims to what He loves and is pleased with; He is the Generous and Bountiful.]

Tawhid [Monotheism] first, O preachers of Islam

Question: Your Eminence, there is no doubt that you know that the religious reality of the nation is a bitter reality in terms of ignorance of the creed and matters of belief, and in terms of the division in methodologies and the neglect of spreading the Islamic call in most parts of the earth according to the first creed and the first methodology by which the nation was reformed. This painful reality has no doubt generated zeal among the sincere and a desire to change it and correct the defect, but they differed in their method of reforming this reality, due to the difference in their doctrinal and methodological orientations - as Your Eminence knows - through the multiplicity of partisan Islamic movements and groups that claimed to reform the Islamic nation for decades, and yet they did not achieve success and prosperity, rather these movements caused the nation to create strife and bring down great calamities and disasters, due to their methodologies and beliefs that contradict the command of the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and what he brought; This has left Muslims—especially the youth—confused about how to address this reality. A Muslim preacher who adheres to the Prophetic methodology and follows the path of the believers, as exemplified by the understanding of the Companions and their righteous successors among the scholars of Islam, may feel that he bears a great responsibility towards this reality and its reform, or at least participate in addressing it.

1. What is your advice to the followers of these movements or groups?
2. What are the effective and successful methods for addressing this reality?
3. How can a Muslim be absolved of responsibility before Allah Almighty on the Day of Judgment?

The answer:

First and foremost, attention must be given to monotheism, as was the way of the prophets and messengers, peace be upon them.

In addition to what was mentioned in the question above regarding the dire state of Muslims, we say: This painful reality is not worse than the state of the Arabs in the pre-Islamic era when our Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was sent to them. This is because the message is present among us, complete, and there is a group that is manifest upon the truth, guiding people with it and calling them to true Islam: in creed, worship, conduct, and methodology. Undoubtedly, the state of those Arabs in the pre-Islamic era is similar to the state of many Muslim groups today!

Therefore, we say: The cure is the same, and the remedy is the same. Just as the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, addressed that earlier ignorance, so too must all Islamic preachers today address the misunderstanding of the meaning of **" la 'iilah 'iilaa allah "**[2] and treat their painful reality with the same cure and remedy.

The meaning of this is very clear. If we reflect on the words of Allah Almighty:

﴿لَّقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا﴾

“There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.”[Al-Ahzb: 21]

Our Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, is the best example for addressing the problems of Muslims in our contemporary world and at all times. This necessitates that we begin with what our Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, began with: first, by reforming what has become corrupted in the beliefs of Muslims; second, in their worship; and third, in their conduct.

By this order, I do not mean separating the first matter, starting with the most important, then the important, and then what is less important!

Rather, I want Muslims to pay close and serious attention to this. By Muslims, I naturally mean preachers, and perhaps it is more accurate to say scholars among them, because today—unfortunately—every Muslim, even one with a profound lack of knowledge, is considered a preacher of Islam. If we recall that well-known principle—not only among scholars but among all reasonable people—that says, "One who lacks something cannot give it," then we know today that there is a very large group, numbering in the millions, of Muslims to whom attention is drawn when the term "preachers" is used.

And by them I mean: the Da’wah group, or: the Tabligh group. However, most of them, as Allah Almighty said:

﴿وَلَـٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

“but most of the people do not know.” [A-Araf: 187]

It is evident from their method of calling to Islam that they completely disregarded the first principle—or the most important matter—of those mentioned earlier, namely: creed, worship, and conduct. They turned away from the reform initiated by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), indeed, by all the prophets, as Allah Almighty clarified in His words:

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[2] **there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah alone**

﴿وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ﴾

"And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], "Worship Allah and avoid Taghut."[An-Nahl: 36]

They do not concern themselves with this fundamental principle and the first pillar of Islam—as is known to all Muslims—this principle to which the first of the noble messengers, Noah (peace be upon him), called for nearly a thousand years. Everyone knows that previous laws did not contain the detailed rulings on worship and transactions that are found in our religion. Because it is the final religion of laws and religions, yet Noah remained among his people for a thousand years less fifty years, spending his time and most of his attention calling for monotheism, yet his people turned away from his call, as Allah Almighty explained in the clear revelation:

﴿وَقَالُوا لَا تَذَرُنَّ آلِهَتَكُمْ وَلَا تَذَرُنَّ وَدًّا وَلَا سُوَاعًا وَلَا يَغُوثَ وَيَعُوقَ وَنَسْرًا﴾

“And said, 'Never leave your gods and never leave Wadd or Suwa' or Yaghuth and Ya'uq and Nasr.”[Nuh: 23]

This clearly demonstrates that the most important thing that those calling to "true Islam" should always focus on is the call to monotheism, which is the meaning of the Almighty's words:

﴿فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ﴾

“So know, [O Muhammad], that there is no deity except Allah” [Muhammad: 19]

This was the Sunnah of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, in both action and teaching.

As for his actions, they are self-evident, because during the Meccan period, the Prophet's actions and call were primarily focused on inviting his people to worship Allah alone, without any partners.

As for his teaching, there is the hadith of Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, found in the two Sahihs (Bukhari and Muslim): **“When the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, sent Mu'adh to Yemen, he told him: 'Let the first thing you call them to be the testimony that there is no deity except Allah. If they obey you in this...”**[3] etc. This hadith is well-known and widely circulated, God willing."

So, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, commanded his companions to begin with what he began with, which is the call to monotheism. There is no doubt that there is

[3] **An authenticated hadith: Narrated by Al-Bukhari (1395) and in other places, Muslim (19), Abu Dawud (1584), and At-Tirmidhi (625), all on the authority of Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him.**

a very big difference between those polytheistic Arabs - in that they understood what was said to them in their language - and most of the Muslim Arabs today who do not need to be called to say: **" la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "**[4]; because they say it despite their different schools of thought, methods and beliefs. They all say: **" la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "**, but in reality they need to understand - more - the meaning of this good word. This difference is a very fundamental difference between the early Arabs who, when the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, called them to say: **" la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "**, would be arrogant, as is clearly stated in the Great Qur'an[5].

Why would they be arrogant? Because they understand that the meaning of this word is that they should not take rivals with Allah and that they should not worship anyone but Allah, and they were worshipping others besides Him. They were calling on other than Allah and seeking help from other than Allah. In addition to making vows to other than Allah, supplicating to other than Allah, sacrificing to other than Him, and seeking judgment from other than Him...etc.

These are the well-known polytheistic and idolatrous practices that they used to do, yet they knew that one of the requirements of this good word - **la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah** - in terms of the Arabic language is that they should disavow all these things because they contradict the meaning of **" la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah ".**

[4] there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah alone

[5] This refers to what Allah Almighty says in Surat As-Saffat: "Indeed they, when it was said to them, "There is no deity but Allah," were arrogant And were saying, Are we to leave our gods for a mad poet?"[As-Saffat: 35-36]

Most Muslims today do not fully understand the meaning of “la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah"

Most Muslims today who profess **"la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "** do not truly understand its meaning. In fact, they may even misunderstand it completely. For example, some[6] have written treatises on the meaning of **"la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "**interpreting it as "**There is no Lord but Allah**!" This is precisely the meaning the polytheists believed in and adhered to, yet their belief did not benefit them.
Allah Almighty says:

﴿وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ﴾

“And if you asked them, "Who created the heavens and earth?" they would surely say, "Allah.” [Luqman: 25]

The polytheists believed that this universe had a Creator who had no partner, but they associated partners with Allah in worship. They believed that the Lord was one, but they believed that there were many deities. Therefore, Allah Almighty refuted this belief, which He called worship of other than Him, by saying:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰ﴾

“And those who take protectors besides Him [say], "We only worship them that they may bring us nearer to Allah in position.” [Az-Zumar: 3]

The polytheists knew that saying **"la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "**required disavowing the worship of anything other than Allah, the Almighty. As for the majority of Muslims today, they have interpreted this good word **"la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "**as “There is no Lord but Allah!!” So if a Muslim says **"la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "** and worships something other than Allah, then he and the polytheists are the same in belief, even if outwardly he is a Muslim, because he says the words **"la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "**So by this phrase he is a Muslim verbally and outwardly.

This is what obligates us all – as callers to Islam – to call to monotheism and establish proof against those who are ignorant of the meaning of **"la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "** and are in opposition to it, unlike the polytheist, because he refuses to say **"la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "**So he is not a Muslim, neither outwardly nor inwardly. As for the masses of Muslims today, they are Muslims, because the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: **“If they say it, they have**

[6] **He is Sheikh Muhammad al-Hashimi, one of the Sufi sheikhs of the Shadhili order in Syria for about 50 years.**

protected their blood and their wealth from me, except for what is due by right, and their reckoning is with Allah Almighty"[7].

Therefore, I say a word—and it is rare for me to say this—which is: The reality of many Muslims today is worse than that of the general Arab population in the pre-Islamic era in terms of their misunderstanding of the meaning of this good word.

For the Arab polytheists understood, but they did not believe, while most Muslims today say what they do not believe. They say: **"la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "**, but they do not truly believe in its meaning[8]. Therefore, I believe that the first duty of Muslim preachers—truly—is to focus on this word and explain its meaning concisely, and then to elaborate on the implications of this good word, namely, sincerity to Allah Almighty in all forms of worship. For when Allah Almighty recounted the words of the polytheists:

﴿مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰ﴾

"We only worship them that they may bring us nearer to Allah in position." [Az-Zumar: 3]

He made every act of worship directed to other than Allah a disbelief in the good word: **"la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "**. For this reason; I say today: There is absolutely no benefit in grouping and assembling Muslims, and then leaving them in their error without understanding this good word. This does not benefit them in this world before the Hereafter! We know the saying of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: **"Whoever dies while testifying that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah alone, sincerely from his heart, Allah will forbid his body from the Fire."** And in another narration: **"He will enter Paradise."**[9]

Paradise can be guaranteed for whoever says it sincerely, even if it is after some suffering and torment befalls the speaker and the one who truly believes in this word. He may be punished based on the sins and transgressions he committed, but his ultimate fate will be to enter Paradise. Conversely, whoever says this good word with his tongue, but faith has not entered his heart, it will not benefit him in the Hereafter. It may benefit him in this world by saving him from fighting and being killed if the Muslims have power and authority, but in the Hereafter it will not benefit him unless he says it while first understanding its meaning, and secondly believing in this meaning. Because understanding alone is not enough unless it is accompanied by faith in this concept. This point, I think, most people are unaware of! It is: understanding

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[7] **An authenticated hadith: Narrated by Al-Bukhari (25) and in other places, and Muslim (22), and others, on the authority of Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with them both.**

[8] **They worship graves, sacrifice to other than Allah, and call upon the dead. This is the reality and truth of what the Rafidites, the Sufis, and the followers of the Sufi orders believe. Pilgrimage to graves, building polytheistic shrines, circumambulating them, seeking help from the righteous, and swearing by them are established beliefs among them.**

[9] **An authenticated hadith: Narrated by Ahmad (5/236), and Ibn Hibban (4) Zawa'id, and authenticated by Al-Albani in As-Sahihah (3355).**

does not necessarily require faith, but rather each of the two must be accompanied by the other in order for him to be a believer. This is because many of the People of the Book, both Jews and Christians, knew that Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was a true messenger in what he claimed regarding his prophethood and mission. However, despite this knowledge, which our Lord, the Exalted, testified to when He said:

﴿الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ﴾

"Those to whom We gave the Scripture know him as they know their own sons." [Al-Baqarah: 146]

This knowledge did not avail them anything before Allah. Why? Because they did not believe in his claim of prophethood and mission. Therefore, knowledge precedes faith, but it is not sufficient on its own. Rather, knowledge must be accompanied by faith and submission, because the Almighty says in His clear revelation:

﴿فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَـٰهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنبِكَ﴾

"So know, [O Muhammad], that there is no deity except Allah and ask forgiveness for your sin" [Muhammad: 19]

Thus, if a Muslim says, **"la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "**with his tongue; He must add to that the knowledge of this word briefly and then in detail. If he knows, believes, and trusts, then he is the one to whom those hadiths apply, some of which I mentioned earlier, including his saying, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, referring to some of the details I mentioned earlier: **"Whoever says: la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah , it will benefit him one day in his life"**[10].

This good word, after knowing its meaning, will save him from eternal damnation in Hell - and this is repeated so that it will be firmly established in the minds - and he may not have performed the required good deeds and refrained from sins, but he was saved from major polytheism and performed what is required and necessary by the conditions of faith in terms of inward actions - and outward actions according to the interpretation of some scholars, and there is a detailed explanation of this which is not the place to elaborate on it -[11]; and he is under Allah's will, and he may enter Hell as a punishment for what he committed or did of sins or neglected some of the obligations, then this good word will save him or Allah will pardon him by His grace and generosity, and this is the meaning of what the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said previously: **"Whoever says: la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah , it will benefit him one day in his life."** As for the one who says it with his tongue and does not understand its meaning, or

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[10] **An authenticated hadith: It was authenticated by Al-Albani in Al-Silsilah Al-Sahihah (1932) and attributed to Abu Saeed Al-A'rabi in his dictionary, Abu Nu'aim in Al-Hilya (5/46), and Al-Tabarani in Al-Awsat (6533), and it is from the hadith of Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him.**

[11] **This is the creed of the righteous predecessors, and it is the dividing line between us and the Kharijites and the Murji'ites.**

understands its meaning but does not believe in this meaning, then his saying: **"la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "** will not benefit him, except in this life if he lives under Islamic rule and not in the Hereafter.

Therefore, it is necessary to focus on calling for unity in every Islamic society or bloc that seeks - truly and diligently - what all or most Islamic groups are chanting about, which is achieving the Islamic society and establishing the Muslim state that rules by what Allah has revealed on any land that does not rule by what Allah has revealed. These groups or these sects cannot achieve this goal - which they have agreed to achieve and to strive - diligently to make it a reality - except by starting with what the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, started with.

The obligation to pay attention to Islamic creed does not mean neglecting the rest of Islamic laws, including acts of worship, conduct, transactions, and ethics

I reiterate that I do not mean to speak of the most important things and what is less important, with preachers limiting themselves to calling to this good word and understanding its meaning, after Allah Almighty has completed His favor upon us by perfecting His religion! Rather, these preachers must carry Islam as a whole, indivisible. When I say this—after that statement, the gist of which is that Islamic preachers should truly care about the most important thing that Islam brought, which is making Muslims understand the correct creed emanating from the good word **"la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "** —I want to draw attention to the fact that this statement does not mean that the Muslim should only understand that the meaning of **"la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "** is that there is no deity worthy of worship in existence except Allah alone! Rather, this also necessitates that he understand the acts of worship by which our Lord Almighty should be worshipped, and none of them should be directed to any of Allah's servants, may He be blessed and exalted. This detail must also be accompanied by that concise explanation of the good word, and it is good to give an example—or more than one, as it seems to me—because a general explanation is not enough.

I say: Many of the truly monotheistic Muslims who do not direct any acts of worship to anyone other than Allah Almighty have minds devoid of many of the correct ideas and beliefs mentioned in the Book and the Sunnah. Many of these monotheists pass by many verses and some hadiths that contain a creed without paying attention to what they contain, even though it is part of the completeness of faith in Allah Almighty. Take, for example, the creed of belief in the exaltedness of Allah Almighty over what He has created. I know from experience that many of our Salafi monotheistic brothers believe with us that Allah Almighty is established on the Throne without interpretation and without specifying how. But when modern Mu'tazilites, or modern Jahmiyyah, or Maturidi or Ash'ari come to them and throw a doubt at them based on the apparent meaning of a verse whose meaning is not understood by the one who whispers doubts or the one to whom the doubts are whispered, they become confused about their creed and go far astray from it. Why? Because he did not receive the correct doctrine from all aspects that were explained in the Book of our Lord, the Almighty, and the hadith of our Prophet

Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, when the contemporary Mu'tazili says: Allah Almighty says:

﴿أَأَمِنتُم مَّن فِي السَّمَاءِ﴾

“Do you feel secure that He who [holds authority] in the heaven” [Al-Mulk: 16]

And you say: Allah is in the heaven, and this means that you have placed your object of worship in a container, which is the created heaven!! He is casting doubt on the one before him.

Showing that the correct doctrine and its implications are unclear in the minds of many

I want to use this example to show that the doctrine of monotheism, with all its implications and requirements, is not clear – unfortunately – in the minds of many who believe in the Salafi creed itself, as well as others who follow the Ash'ari, Maturidi, or Jahmi creeds in such a matter. I aim with this example to show that the matter is not as easy as some preachers who meet with us in calling to the Book and the Sunnah portray it today. The matter is not as easy as some of them claim, and the reason is what was previously explained regarding the difference between the ignorance of the early polytheists when they were called to say: **"la 'iilah 'iilaa Allah "**, and they refused because they understood the meaning of this good word, and most of the contemporary Muslims today when they say this word, but they do not understand its correct meaning. This fundamental difference is now realized in such a creed, and I mean by it the exaltation of Allah Almighty over all His creation. This needs explanation, and it is not enough for a Muslim to believe that

﴿الرَّحْمَـٰنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَىٰ﴾

“The Most Merciful [who is] above the Throne established.” [Ta HA: 5]

“Have mercy on those in earth, and He who is in heaven will have mercy on you.”[12]

Without realizing that the word “in” which appears in this hadith is not circumstantial, and it is like the “in” which appears in the Almighty’s saying:

﴿أَأَمِنتُم مَّن فِي السَّمَاءِ﴾

“Do you feel secure that He who [holds authority] in the heaven” [Al-Mulk: 16]

Because “in” here means “on,” and the evidence for this is very, very much so. Among it is the previous hadith that is widely circulated among people, and it is authentic in all its chains of transmission—praise be to Allah—and the meaning of his saying, peace and blessings be upon him: **“Have mercy on those in earth”** does not mean the insects and worms that are inside the earth! Rather, it means those on the earth. From humans and animals, and this is in accordance with what the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: **“…He who is in heaven will have mercy on you,”** meaning: above heaven. Such a detail is something that those who

[12] **Authentic Hadith: Narrated by Abu Dawud (4941) and Al-Tirmidhi (1925), and authenticated by Al-Albani in Al-Sahihah (925).**

respond to the call of truth must be aware of. This is illustrated by the hadith of the shepherdess, which is well-known and famous. I only mention the relevant part of it: when the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, asked her: **"Where is Allah?"** She said to him: **"In heaven."**[13] If you were to ask the senior sheikhs of Al-Azhar today, for example, **"Where is Allah?"** they would tell you: **"He is everywhere!"** While the shepherdess answered that He is in heaven, and the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, confirmed her answer. Why? Because she answered according to her innate nature, and she lived in what we might call, in our modern terminology, a **"Salafist environment"** that was not tainted by any bad environment—in general terms—because she graduated, as they say today, from the school of the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him. This school was not exclusive to some men or some women, but rather it was common among people and included men and women and encompassed the entire society. Therefore, the shepherdess knew the creed because she was not tainted by any bad environment. She knew the correct creed that came in the Quran and Sunnah, something many who claim to know the Quran and Sunnah do not know. They do not even know where their Lord is! Even though it is mentioned in the Quran and Sunnah. Today I say: there is nothing of this clarity and explicitness among Muslims, such that if you were to ask—I am not saying: a shepherdess—but a leader of a nation or a group, he would be perplexed in answering, as many are perplexed today, except for those upon whom Allah has mercy, and they are few indeed!!!

[13] An authenticated hadith: Narrated by Muslim (537), Abu Dawud (930), and Al-Nasa'i (1/14-18), on the authority of Mu'awiyah ibn Al-Hakam Al-Sulami, may Allah be pleased with him.

Calling people to the correct faith requires a great and continuous effort

Therefore, the call to monotheism and its establishment in people's hearts requires us not to pass over the verses without explanation as in the early days; because - firstly - they understood Arabic expressions easily, and secondly - because there was no deviation or distortion in the creed stemming from philosophy and scholastic theology, which led to the emergence of what opposes the sound creed. Our situation today is completely different from that of the early Muslims, so it is not permissible for us to imagine that the call to the correct creed is today as easy as it was in the early days. I will illustrate this with an example that no two people will disagree on and no two goats will butt heads over - God willing: It was known to be easy at that time for the Companion to hear the hadith directly from the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and then the companions follower to hear the hadith directly from the Companion… and so on. We stop at the three centuries that are known for their goodness, and we ask:

Was there something called the science of hadith? The answer is: No.

And was there something called the science of Hadith criticism and authentication? The answer is: No.

But now these two sciences are indispensable for the student of knowledge, and they are among the communal obligations. This is so that the world today can discern whether a hadith is authentic or weak. The matter is no longer as easy as it was for the Companions, because the Companions received hadiths from other Companions who were praised by Allah Almighty...etc. What was easy then is not easy today in terms of the purity of knowledge and the reliability of the sources of transmission. Therefore, it is essential to pay attention to this matter and give it the attention it deserves, in light of the problems surrounding us today as Muslims, problems that did not befall the early Muslims. These problems stem from doctrinal contamination that has caused difficulties and created doubts from those who deviate from the correct creed and the path of truth under many names, including the claim of calling only to the Quran and Sunnah! This is what those affiliated with the science of Kalam (Islamic scholastic theology) claim and assert.

It is appropriate here to mention some of what has been narrated in authentic hadiths on this subject, including: When the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) mentioned strangers in some of these hadiths, he said**, "Each one of them will receive fifty times the reward." They**

asked, “From among us, O Messenger of Allah, or from among them?” He replied, “From among you.”[14]

This is one of the consequences of the profound alienation Islam experiences today, a situation not present in its early days. Undoubtedly, the alienation of the early days stemmed from a clash between blatant polytheism and pure monotheism, between outright disbelief and sincere faith. Now, however, the problem lies within the Muslim community itself. For most, monotheism is riddled with flaws, and they direct their worship to other than Allah while still claiming to be believers. This issue must be addressed first and foremost. Secondly, some should not argue that we must move to a stage other than monotheism—namely, political action! Islam's call is, first and foremost, a call to truth. We should not simply say, "We are Arabs, and the Quran was revealed in our language," while reminding ourselves that Arabs today are the opposite of non-Arabs who adopted Arabic due to their estrangement from their native tongue. This estrangement has distanced them from the Book of their Lord and the Sunnah of their Prophet. Even if we—the Arabs—were to understand Islam correctly, it would not be incumbent upon us to engage in political action, to mobilize people politically, and to distract them from what they should be preoccupied with: understanding Islam in its creed, worship, conduct, and behavior! I do not believe that there is a people numbering in the millions who have correctly understood Islam - I mean: doctrine, worship, and behavior - and have been raised on it.

[14] An authenticated hadith: Narrated by al-Tabarani in al-Kabir (10/255), no. (10394), on the authority of Ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him. It has a supporting narration on the authority of 'Uqbah ibn Ghazwan, the Companion, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated by al-Bazzar, as mentioned in al-Zawa'id (7/282). It also has another supporting narration on the authority of Abu Tha'labah al-Khushani, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated by Abu Dawud (4341), and authenticated by al-Albani in al-Sahihah (494).

The basis of change is the methodology of purification and education

Therefore, we constantly emphasize and focus on the two fundamental points that form the basis of true change: purification and education. Both are essential. If there is any purification to be done in a country, it is in matters of creed. This, in itself, is a great and momentous undertaking for a part of the larger Muslim community—I mean, a nation. As for worship, it needs to be freed from narrow sectarianism and a return to the authentic Sunnah. There may be eminent scholars who have a correct understanding of Islam in all its aspects, but I do not believe that one, two, three, ten, or twenty individuals can fulfill the duty of purification—purifying Islam from everything that has crept into it, whether in creed, worship, or conduct.

A few individuals cannot undertake this task of purifying it of all that has become attached to it and raising those around them with sound and correct education. Purification and education are currently lacking.

Therefore, political action in any Muslim society not governed by Sharia will have negative consequences before these two crucial issues are addressed. However, in any country governed by Sharia, [Shura] advice serves as a substitute for political action. This advice can be offered through consultation or by expressing it in the best possible manner, adhering to Sharia principles and avoiding coercion or defamation. The message itself establishes the argument and absolves one of responsibility.

Another aspect of giving advice is engaging people in beneficial activities, such as correcting their beliefs, worship, conduct, and transactions.

Some might mistakenly believe that we seek to achieve moral and spiritual purification within Muslim society! This is not something we even consider or dream of, as it is impossible to achieve. Allah Almighty says in the Holy Quran:

﴿وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ۖ وَلَا يَزَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ﴾

“And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community; but they will not cease to differ.” [Hud: 118]

These people will not be fulfilled in the words of our Lord Almighty unless they understand Islam correctly and raise themselves, their families, and those around them on this correct Islam.

Who engages in political work? And when?

Engaging in political work now is a distraction! While we do not deny its importance, we believe in a logical and legitimate sequence simultaneously. We begin with creed, followed by worship, then conduct—correctionally and educationally—and then the day will inevitably come when we enter the stage of politics in its legitimate sense. For politics means managing the affairs of the nation. Who manages the affairs of the nation? Not Zaid, Bakr, or Amr, who establishes a party, leads a movement, or directs a group! This matter is specific to the ruler, who is given allegiance by the Muslims. He is the one who must know the politics of reality and manage it. If the Muslims are not united—as is the case today—then each ruler assumes this responsibility within the limits of his authority. As for occupying ourselves with matters that, even if we assume we know them perfectly, will not benefit us because we are unable to manage them. Because we do not have the authority to manage the nation, and this alone is futile and pointless, let us take as an example the ongoing wars against Muslims in many Islamic countries. Is it beneficial to ignite the Muslims' enthusiasm towards them when we do not have the necessary jihad to be managed by a responsible imam to whom allegiance has been pledged?! There is no benefit in this action, and we do not say: that it is not obligatory! But we say: that it is premature, and therefore we must occupy ourselves and others whom we call to our call by explaining to them the correct Islam, and raising them in a correct manner. As for occupying them with matters of enthusiasm and emotion, that will distract them from being able to understand the call that every responsible Muslim must undertake; Correcting beliefs, correcting worship, and correcting conduct are individual obligations for which one cannot be excused for negligence. Other matters, however, are collective obligations, such as what is called today "the jurisprudence of reality"[15] and engaging in political work, which is the responsibility of those who have the power to make decisions and who can practically benefit from it. But for some individuals who have no power to make decisions and engage in political work to distract the public with the important from the most important is something that diverts them from correct knowledge! This is something we see clearly in many of the curricula of Islamic parties and groups today, where we know that some of them have turned away from teaching the Muslim youth who are gathered around these preachers in order to learn and understand the correct belief, correct worship, and correct conduct. Instead, some of these preachers are preoccupied with political work and trying to enter parliaments that rule by other

[15] **Fiqh Al-Waqi' = A deep and accurate understanding of the contemporary circumstances, events, and problems faced by Muslims, and linking them to Islamic legal rulings and the objectives of Sharia, in order to derive appropriate and applicable fatwas and rulings.**

than what Allah has revealed! This has diverted them from the most important and they have become preoccupied with what is not important in these current circumstances.

As for what was mentioned in the question about how a Muslim can be absolved of responsibility or contribute to changing this painful reality, we say: Each Muslim is responsible according to his capacity. The learned among them are obligated to do what is not obligatory for the unlearned. As I mention on such an occasion: Allah Almighty has perfected the blessing with His Book, and made it a constitution for the believers in Him. Among that is that Allah Almighty said:

﴿فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِن كُنتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ﴾

"so ask the people of the message if you do not know." [Al-Anbiya: 7]

Allah Almighty has made the Islamic community into two parts: learned and unlearned, and obligated each of them to do what He did not obligate the other to do. So those who are not learned should ask the learned, and the learned should answer them about what they were asked about. So the duties - from this standpoint - differ according to the individuals. The learned today must call to the call of truth within the limits of his ability, and the unlearned must ask about what concerns him regarding his own right or the one who is a shepherd. As for a wife, child, or the like, if a Muslim—from either side—does what he can, he will be saved, for Allah Almighty says:

﴿لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا﴾

"Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity." [Al-Baqarah: 286]

We are, unfortunately, living through a tragedy that has befallen Muslims, one unprecedented in history: the unification of the disbelievers against the Muslims, as the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) foretold in his well-known and authentic hadith: **"The nations will gather against you as diners gather around a bowl of food." They asked, "Will we be few in number on that day, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "No, you will be many on that day, but you will be like the scum carried by a flood. Allah will remove the fear of you from the hearts of your enemies and will cast weakness into your hearts." They asked, "What is this weakness, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Love of this world and hatred of death."**[16] Therefore, it is the duty of scholars to strive in purification and education, by teaching Muslims the correct monotheism and correcting beliefs, worship, and conduct, each according to his ability and in the countries in which he lives; because they cannot wage jihad against the Jews in one rank as long as they are as we are today, scattered, not united in one country or one

[16] **An authenticated hadith: Narrated by Abu Dawud (4297) and Ahmad (5/287), on the authority of Thawban, may Allah be pleased with him, and authenticated by Al-Albani in Al-Sahihah (958) through its two chains of transmission.**

rank, so they cannot carry out such jihad to repel the enemies who have attacked them, but they must take every legitimate means that they can take; because we do not have the material ability, and even if we could, we would not be able to actually move; Because there are governments, leaders, and rulers in many Muslim countries who adopt policies that do not conform to the Sharia policy - unfortunately - but we can achieve - Allah Almighty's permission - these two great things that I mentioned earlier, which are purification and education.

And when Muslim preachers carry out this very important duty in a country that does not adopt a policy that does not conform to the Sharia policy, and they meet on this basis, then I believe - on that day - that the words of Allah Almighty will be true for them:

﴿وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ بِنَصْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ يَنصُرُ مَن يَشَاءُ ۖ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾

"And that day the believers will rejoice In the victory of Allah. He gives victory to whom He wills, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful." [Ar-Rum: 4-5]

It is incumbent upon every Muslim to apply Allah's rules in all aspects of his life to the best of his ability.

Therefore, it is the duty of every Muslim to do what he can, for Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity. There is no necessary connection between establishing true monotheism and correct worship, and establishing an Islamic state in lands that do not rule according to Allah's law.

The first thing to be established according to Allah's law is the establishment of monotheism. Undoubtedly, there have been specific circumstances in certain eras where seclusion was preferable to interaction with others. A Muslim might isolate himself in a remote mountain pass, worship his Lord, and protect himself from the harm people inflict upon him and from harming them. Many hadiths address this matter, although the general principle, as stated in the hadith of Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), is: **"The believer who mixes with people and patiently endures their harm is better than the believer who does not mix with people and does not patiently endure their harm."**[17]

The Muslim state is undoubtedly a means to establish Allah's rule on earth, not an end in itself.

It is strange that some preachers focus on matters beyond their capacity and neglect what is obligatory and easily attainable! This is achieved through striving against their own desires, as that Muslim preacher stated. He advised his followers, saying, **"Establish the state of Islam within yourselves, and it will be established for you in your land."** Yet, we find many of his followers contradicting this, making the bulk of their call to the Oneness of Allah Almighty in governance, expressing this with the well-known phrase, **"Governance belongs to Allah."**

Undoubtedly, governance belongs to Allah alone, and He has no partner in this or anything else. However, some of them adhere to one of the four schools of thought, then say—when presented with clear and authentic Sunnah—"This contradicts my school of thought!" So where is the application of Allah's law in following the Sunnah?!

And some of them worship Allah according to Sufi practices! So where is the application of Allah's law in monotheism?! They demand of others what they do not demand of themselves. It is very easy to apply Allah's law in your beliefs, your worship, your conduct, your home, the

[17] **An authenticated hadith: It was narrated by al-Tirmidhi (2507), Ibn Majah (4032), al-Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad (388), and Ahmad (5/365), on the authority of a sheikh from among the companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and he authenticated it as sound in al-Sahih (939).**

upbringing of your children, your buying and selling, while it is very difficult to compel or remove a ruler who, in many of his rulings, does not abide by Allah's law. Why then do they leave the easy path to the difficult one?

This indicates one of two things: either there is poor upbringing and guidance, or there is a flawed belief that drives them to focus on what they cannot achieve rather than what is within their capacity.

Today, I see no alternative but to dedicate ourselves entirely to purification, education, and calling people to the correct belief and worship, each according to their ability. Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

May Allah's peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad and his family.